

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Carmel Kosztolitz, I live in Cheshire, and I am an avid supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I have volunteered for CAGV for the past 2 years. I am a retired health professional employed by the state of Connecticut as an Occupational Therapist, working with people suffering from chronic mental illness.

I am testifying in favor of HB-6355, **An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders**. I have seen from my own experience the devastating effects that suicide of a loved one has on their families, friends, and communities. The rate of U.S adolescents and young adults dying of suicide has reached its highest level in nearly two decades. In 2017, there were 47% more suicides among people aged 15-19 than in the year 2000. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people aged 10-24. LGBT youth are almost 5 times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth.

I cannot stop wondering whether Adam Lanza, a deeply disturbed mentally ill youth, would not have succeeded in murdering 20 young children and 6 female educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2014, if he did not have access to firearms and assault weapons in his own home. If there were more public awareness about the ERPO law in Ct., a family member or a health professional could have used the law to remove the firearms from his home and stop a deadly massacre. The ERPO serves a public safety protection in keeping firearms away from people who exhibit a threat of imminent harm to themselves or others.

From my own personal experience, I remember a young man in the inpatient psychiatric unit that I worked in, who expressed homicidal thoughts and ideation, and was in possession of a firearm at his home. Fortunately, he was hospitalized before any violent action was committed. CT's ERPO law allowed the court to confiscate his firearm temporarily. However, as a healthcare team, we struggled for months on end to decide if and when this young man was safe to return home.

Presently, At Risk persons can simply request that their firearms be returned upon expiration of the court order, which only lasts up to one year. That is why I strongly believe that Connecticut must require a court hearing to demonstrate that the risk of imminent harm no longer exists before firearms are returned. In my opinion as a healthcare professional, this is simply common sense legislation to protect CT residents from self harm and harm to others with a firearm.

Up to two-thirds of CT gun deaths are by suicide. Firearm suicide is the second leading cause of suicide in CT. If we want to reduce gun death and suicide, we must address firearm suicide. Extreme Risk Protection Orders are an effective last-resort means with due-process protections to temporarily remove guns from someone at imminent risk of suicide. Risk protection laws are demonstrated to reduce firearm suicide. A Duke/Yale/ UCONN study reported that in CT, for every 10-20 risk protection orders issued, one suicide is [prevented](#).

I believe that suicide is an act of desperation which is preventable in the majority of cases. I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works more effectively to prevent firearm suicide and homicide.

I greatly appreciate your time, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carmel Kosztolitz
Cheshire, Ct.